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wisdom as old men, and, in fact, they have more influence. We do not say that women are not duly appreciated in England. We have often been struck with the patronizing and also kindly manner with which a gentleman will go up to a lady, and endeavor to draw her out. But he does it from good feeling, and not at all for his own satisfaction, so that she ought to be more obliged.

A dispassionate reader of the newspapers in these days of political strife may amuse himself without much trouble by picking out the literary plums in the orations of our party pugilists. Here is a simile by one of the powerful of Boston, which we should not be surprised to see applied by some of our sharp-eared seekers for derisive epithets. A "cucumber platform" is quite as good for Buncombe sarcasm as any that are current:

Mr. President, when you and I were young, there appeared a clever novel called *Vivian Grey*, written by a young man who has since risen to high political distinction in England. In that novel there is a celebrated recipe for dressing cucumbers, which comes to my mind in illustration of the pains taken to devise platforms and their subsequent fate: "You must be careful to pick out the straightest, thinnest skinned, most seedless cucumber that you can find. Six hours before you want to eat it, put the stalk in cold water on a marble slab—not the whole cucumber—that's nonsense. Then pare it very carefully so as to take off all the green outside, and nothing more. Slice it as thin as possible, spread it over your dish, and sprinkle it with a good deal of white pepper, red pepper, salt and mustard-seed, mix some oil and common vinegar with a little Chili, and drown it in them. Open a large window very wide and throw it all out."

In like manner to make a political platform, you must take as comprehensive a political creed as can be found. Slice it as thin as possible; that is, cut it up into as many resolutions as the patience of your convention will bear. Sprinkle these with white pepper to suit one section of the country, and black pepper to suit another. Stir in oil for the sentimentalists and vinegar for the fanatics—then print it on a very large sheet of paper, open a pigeon-hole very wide and thrust it in so far that it may never be seen or heard of again.

Literary Record.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT, FROM 1827 TO 1858. Translated by Frederick Kapp. Rudd & Carleton, New York.

THE publication of the correspondence of Alexander von Humboldt with Varnhagen von Ense has given great offence to various personages, whom the illustrious author of "*Cosmos*" has deigned to immortalize by his strictures. We do not feel much disposed to condole with them. Truth cannot progress except at the expense of social conventionalities. If these letters or any other letters written as these were, had been given prematurely to the world to minister to a love of scandal, we should demur, but coming from a source to which no such motive can be imputed, we can overlook an infraction of conventional propriety. It is well known how fond Humboldt was of taking a sort of bird's-eye view of society, and chatting about it with persons whom he met in the salons of Berlin and Paris, and the other cultivated cities of the world. It is well known how he delighted to say a kind word here and an encouraging word there; how his great soul swelled with joy if he could give pleasure or excite to noble exertion any earnest man, woman, or child thrown across his path. It is well known, how different he was in that respect from the traditional dryness and one-

sidedness of learned men; how wonderfully he combined a love of humanity with a love of external nature, thus proving that his interest in the circuit of created life was complete. One might ask how it was that he did not more fully record his studies of society—why he did not analyze those who were made the recipients of the bounties of his regal nature—the princes, kings, literati, and savans of his day? The answer is that his mental faculties were entirely absorbed by scientific labors of a different aim, and even if he had wished to record his observations of human nature, he could not well have commanded the time requisite for the faithful fulfillment of such a task. If this reply be not satisfactory, let us be thankful for the Varnhagen Letters, which are an indication of what he might have done.

It may be argued that the benign disposition, for which we give Humboldt so much credit, was strangely manifested in his letters to Varnhagen, in his applying the harshest terms to the son of Niebuhr, and others, and by referring with very questionable feelings of respect and admiration to Prince Albert and other persons of high station. "How belittling these letters are," says the poetical Mrs. Sillysnip, "I always admired Humboldt," says the Rev. Mr. Honeybag, "until I read these letters; now he has my profoundest contempt. The idea of a man of his great mind slandering in this manner the distinguished persons who honored him with their intimacy!" The clerical critic grows indignant, and is rewarded by the approving smiles of Mrs. S., and the small circle of admirers who listen to his remarks. "What next?" says the elegant Madame Parini, while playing with her little lap-dog. "I shall never again invite a learned man to my house. What right has he to abuse Prince Albert? The prince's letter was very polite; why should the old man fret about it?" A very pompous and dignified old gentleman now takes up the word, and after considerable hesitation says in a solemn voice that he regards the publication of the letters as a breach of confidence. They were *private* letters. "And the letters themselves," he adds with emphasis, "are revolutionary in their spirit and unseemly in their tone." This declaration creates the greatest sensation, for he who delivers it is generally slow in expressing his opinion. He is no less a personage than the Hon. Jeremiah Philat, the president of several moneyed institutions, a millionaire, the father of a family of fashionable daughters, and one of the luminaries of society. Among heavy literary men, and other gleaners in the dusty strata of orthodox facts, the great man is also subjected to most malignant criticism. His bold utterances confound the stagnant conservatism of their musty natures. We heard some of these men, who disguise their scanty knowledge under a certain vivacity and smartness of mannerism, declare that the letters are totally devoid of interest. "Not one startling incident in them," they say. Some actually make their friends believe that they censure the letters for their want of brilliancy, whereas, in fact, they are utterly ignorant of the relations in which Humboldt lived with his age, of the characters of the parties referred to, and of the circumstances under which they were written. Who can read the letters of Arago, Metternich, Madame Récamier, Manzoni, and the Duchess of Orleans, and not award a verdict of interest to the volume, and this, too, without including in the verdict the short, pithy, and frank utterances of the illustrious commentator. Humboldt is one of the few exceptions among men of his ability and pursuits who have come in contact with the world of power and ambition and not been corrupted by it. He saw what men really were, and expressed himself accordingly, as in the case of Von Raumer, the Minister of Public

Worship and Instruction, whose "brutality and insolence, hatred of all science and pernicious activity" excited his contempt. Humboldt lived consistently, as all men do who think more about truth than of themselves, and he lived long enough to be recognized and indorsed by his contemporaries. It is fortunate for the cause of social progress that this correspondence sees the light during the life of those parties affected by it, who have committed themselves in commendation of their judge. It will humble a good many "Sir Oracles" in the world of thought, besides "the lords of pride and power." In this age of gilded conceit, society is benefited more by a lash of this sort than by any of the "honorable mentions" which the world allows to its butterfly favorites after death.

NUGAMENTA, a Book of Verses, by George Edward Rice. J. G. Tilton & Co., Boston.

On contemplating a picture, one very soon determines as to whether or not the painter of it is equal to his subject. If we place an artist on a level with his subject, we may fail to be impressed by him; if we are content to relish his feeling, wherever it may be revealed with greatest power, we then take pleasure in his performance. The same rule applies to poetic effusions. One advantage the poet possesses over the artist is, that he can give us, within book-covers, a gallery of diverse subjects, and let us please ourselves. The author of *Nugamenta* seems to us to be most successful in pieces provoked by a love of humor: the thoughts he would have us accept from the deep sea of reflection and sentiment are not so happily suggestive. Of the former class we would mention "A Night in the Rural Districts," "An Answer to an Invitation to Dine," and the paraphrases of conundrums and similar witticisms based on punning, called "Old Wine in New Bottles." From the latter collection we take the following:

"Said Johnson, this galvanized goblet of lead
Shall be his who can soonest assemble
His wits, and say when can a candle be said
A tombstone at all to resemble.
Then Jackson replied, with successful endeavor,
Extending his hand for the cup,
That a candle resembles a tombstone whenever
'Tis for any late husband set up."

"The Pilgrim o'er a desert wild
Should ne'er let want confound him,
For he at any time can eat
The sand which is around him.
It might seem odd that he could find
Such palatable fare,
Did not we know the sons of Ham
Were bred and mustered there."

"In a rage to the office of Counsellor B.
Rushed a gallant militia commander
To learn whether "Jackass," as oft he was called,
Was a ground for an action of slander;
The lawyer replied, "In some cases the term,
If not slanderous, at least is pseudonymous,
But in yours (and for this I shall make you no charge),
I consider it merely synonymous."

"Once, at a feast, when jokes flew round
Much thicker than the flies,
The host had doubts if he should carve
The mutton *saddlewise*,

And therefore turned to Theodore Hook,
The celebrated Wit,
Who answered "*Bridlewise*, for in
My mouth will be a bit."

LEAVES OF GRASS, by Walt Whitman. Eldridge & Thayer, Boston.

It seems as if the author of *Leaves of Grass* had converted his mind into a mental reservoir by tumbling into it *pêle-mêle* all the floating conceits his brain ever gave birth to. He manifests no other sign of mental capacity; for we find no trace of judgment, taste, or healthy sensibility in the work. It is a book of poetry such as may well please twenty-one year old statesmen and philosophers, and people who pride themselves more in being able to read and write than able to think. Such poetry (!) is characteristic of a country like ours, where there is abundance of everything to eat and drink, and to wear, and good pay for labor.

NORTON'S HANDBOOK TO EUROPE; or, How to Travel in the Old World, by J. H. Siddons. Charles B. Norton, New York.

To one of our countrymen about to visit Europe, a general idea of the journey is of more service than an elaborate map of it. In this portable book, Mr. Siddons sums up European attractions in a sort of lively, hop-skip-and-jump style, without that confusion of "interesting details," which perplexes the traveller so much in the larger compendiums of travel. He names routes, hotels, sights, and scenes, in such a way as to relieve the traveller, by furnishing something to *start* with, a matter of more consequence than is generally supposed.

PUBLISHING GOSSIP.—There has been little doing in the world of books, here in New York, during the past month. That is, little worthy of extensive notice. The sensation publishers have been seized with the Presidential fever, which has broken out virulently, in an avalanche of biographies, setting forth the innumerable quantity of virtues the various candidates for President are possessed of, but not a word of their shortcomings. We pity the poor fellows who get up these windy works; we pity the publishers who publish them, and we pity the credulous people who read them. Good old Abe Lincoln, seems to have been a difficult subject to treat, and the literary gentleman who performed the task (we mean the man who wrote the biggest one) seems to have had more than he bargained for in finding something to interest the reader. There is no romance in flatboating and rail-splitting, nothing to improve the understanding, tickle the fancy, and stir our patriotism until it fairly boils, which is essential to a well-contested campaign. If we had an enemy to punish vigorously, we would compel him to read the various editions of the Life of honest Abe Lincoln, for at least a month.

The lives of Messrs. Bell and Everett, who have expressed their willingness to act for us in Washington, are said to be quite equal to standard literature. Bell's Life, it is charged, has been somewhat curtailed by his publisher, who had more faith in Everett, whose life he made twice as long, this being the only means left him of showing his contempt for the convention that made the nomination. We forgot to mention that with Lincoln the great trouble was how to get his life long enough for two shillings. To do this it was found necessary to give a full and accurate history of the sweeps he pulled the flat-boat with. A very highminded publisher, who boasts that he never in his life published the life of a Presidential candidate—who was content to get rich by republishing English works he forgot to pay copyright on—says he wishes our enlightened